Social Integration of Children with Special Educational Needs in Hungary

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Abstract

“States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning directed to: ... Enabling persons with disabilities to participate effectively in a free society.” (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006, Article 24)

Thesis statement

The Hungarian educational provision system efficiently facilitates the social integration of learners with special educational needs in Tüskevár Elementary and Secondary School in Budapest.

The thesis explores the experiences of children with special educational needs by analyzing the case study carried out at Tüskevár Elementary and Secondary School in Budapest. After presenting the Hungarian educational framework, education policies and characteristics of the provision system, a sociological context is given highlighting the main sociological theories of education and approaches to special educational. This gave a base for data collection and the methodology of information gathering. Evidence was collected from observation of events at Tüskevár, surveys distributed among professionals and parents, and focus groups interviews with the same two social groups that were the target of the surveys. Findings are connected to the previously presented sociological theories bearing in mind the specificities of the Hungarian provision system. The main finding of the case study is a mutually shared experiences of parents and professionals concerning part of the Hungarian education system, special education provision. Moreover, a significance contrast between the experiences with the education system and with Tüskevár was identified.

Key words

special educational needs (SEN), social integration, provision system
1. Introduction

The purpose of the thesis is to find out what conditions are offered to professionals and parents of Tüskevár Primary and Secondary School by the Hungarian educational provision system. The main focus of the analysis is whether these conditions (resources, channels, networks) create a state for social actors of SEN that facilitates and promotes integration of children with SEN at the school. The thesis focuses on how the macro-environment preconditions the integration of children with SEN. Questions, identified from previous literature are implemented as focuses of the essay, in addition, a research will be the base of the thesis that is narrowed down to one institution. Previous researches, examining both macro- and micro-environment, concentrated on teachers’ proper training, the quantity and quality of these education processes could predetermine other SEN participants’ effectiveness as well. However, whether children are able to the full potentials depends on other different factors as well. One of these factors is a permanent quality communication between professionals (special education teacher, educational consultant, developer teacher, psychologist, psychiatrist, drama teacher, art therapist, sociopedagogist) and parents/legal guardians. Relations, trust and good communication are prerequisites to partnership that promotes effective inclusion.

The key point of responsibility in whether children with SEN could get the best help from the education system lies in the effect that the diagnosis could generate. It could act as an unreasonable stigmatization, or unnecessary labelling and/or create an element of distrust between educators and parents, if dealt with insensitively. One of the purposes of the educational provision system is the proper and full preparation of professionals. It is especially important in case of SEN, considering their crucial role in the whole diagnostic process and later, social integration. The paper seeks to gain insights into part of the Hungarian educational provision system-special education by applying Bourdieu’s reproduction theory and Mill’s sociological imagination theory. Other key sociological concepts: social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), the sociology of special education (Tomlinson, 2012), and social integration.

The following subtopics have been identified by previous literature. The questions support the identification specific issue within the field, and that are important to consider when it comes to the study of the provision system.
1. **Macro environment (policies, regulations and implementation):** Is feedback asked from micro-environmental actors for policy making? How regulations affect the functions and practices of an educational institution? What governmental aid is being offered to schools and to families? What are allocation processes based on?

2. **Professionals and their training (psychologists, psychiatrists, teachers, special education teachers, educational consultants):** How are they being prepared for children with SEN? Who becomes a teacher and why? How SEN teachers being provided a potential growth in their career? What working conditions are being offered for teachers? Are pedagogical inspections useful for professionals?

3. **Cooperation, communication, networks:** How does the system provide means and conditions for cooperation between SEN specialist and other actors (e.g. teachers, parents)? Why do parents experience difficulty in the system? How much parents are involved in processes and informed about potential choices?

4. **Micro-environment (parents of children with SEN):** Who is placed into special education? How teachers and professionals affect diagnoses? How does the diagnoses affect children’s education? How does the diagnoses affect children’s and their family’s everyday life? Does diagnosis help integration?

2. **Literature review**

The literature review aims to give a background for the research by locating the key sociological perspectives in sociology on education and special education, summarizing the most important policies retrospectively and recently. Another important part of the review is the thematic analysis of specific issues and questions targeted by earlier literature on special education.

2.1 **The Hungarian Framework: The Education System and Special Education Policies, Definition of SEN**

The following section focuses on summarizing the background and the context in which schools, professionals, parents and children have to function. The review
underlines the most recent education policies and legislations, demonstrating its position in the international setting and highlights the attributes of the provision system. Additionally, it gives the current definition and national categories of special educational needs.

The major institution that is responsible for the education system in Hungary is the Ministry of Human Capacities and its section, the Deputy State Secretariat for Social Inclusion defines policies and measures related to social inclusion for disadvantaged groups. One of the principal duties of the establishment is, in broad terms, to development of education from kindergarten to university. The Ministry is liable for defining the national curriculum, developing and selecting of textbooks, setting teachers’ salaries, designing teacher career systems and planning the public budget for primary and secondary schools. The Secretariat works on defining policies and measures connected to social inclusion for disadvantaged groups. (OECD, 2015)

Hereby, I underline a prominent issue that is relevant to the topic of the essay, which is concerned with the most recent policies and practices targeting the development of quality teachers and the problem of teacher shortages. The importance of teacher policies that try to attract and develop the field is a response to social as well as economic expectations. These policies should develop to solve teacher shortages that are mainly due to ageing, and the field being unattractive due to low wages, lack of resources, and overload of work. In order to distribute teachers among schools and keep up with the constantly changing role of teachers on the individual, classroom, school and community level, it is dismissible for policies to focus on training teachers for quality education that would create an effective learning environment for different students, and that would fill up the gap of teachers needed for disadvantaged students. (OECD, 2005) Since 2011, teachers have had to prepare a portfolio tracking their professional development and during the pedagogical inspections, based on which they receive an external evaluation as well. Besides a decent salary that would attract students to this profession, but social acknowledgement and a higher social status of the profession. Research shows that in 2013, the salary of Hungarian teachers was among the lowest in all OECD countries. It is also clearly identifiable that there is an ageing teacher population in the country regarding the fact that only 30% of teachers are under the age of 40. (OECD, 2015) These
facts show a part of the challenges policy makers are facing. The presented problem is embedded into a theoretical context later.

Before 1985, children with SEN in Hungary studied in fully separated, closed institutions that did not allow to pursue further studying. In 2003, the categories of disability were extended, and the conditions of diagnosis were also reformulated. This meant that in the following five years, the number of children with special educational need increased fivefold. The Hungarian legislation on special education and disabilities was modified to large extent in 2007. The ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities obliged Hungary to continue providing a legal framework, policies and practices that are appropriate to international resumptions. The key components of the existing scheme are discussed here. Other than the official definition, which will be discussed in the next paragraph, there are conditions set for the educational requirements of SEN and classification criteria for national categories of SEN. The framework clarifies the government support that is available to those fitting into the categories, which include free textbooks, increased family allowance, longer family leave, nursing fee for caretakers etc. Children with a diagnosis have the right to receive special treatment and according to the Act on Equal Opportunities, parents have the right to be involved in decision-making (for example, decision about the school their child would attend). (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2018)

Hungarian Special Education Policies are in line with European Union practices: selection mechanisms, complex diagnosis, inclusive education, etc. It offers diagnosis processes, counselling and Education Guidance Service (family care, therapy) for those in need. It is a duty of public education to support the development of children to their full potential and to “…establish possibilities for the full social inclusion…” (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2018) It is a specific support measure to include provision for children with SEN, whether they attend mainstream or special schools. (European Commission, n.d.) The Public Education Development Strategy 2014-2020 prioritizes the challenges of the current Hungarian provision system: “…developing the SEN welfare system that provides the ability to recognize individual needs…”, “…developing pedagogical assistance services…”, “…strengthening inclusive education in mainstream institutions…” (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2018) The efficiency of educational institutions working with
children with SEN is measured according to the same standards as other educational institutions: teachers and schools are part of the pedagogical inspection scheme, students’ achievements are measured according to national and international standards. An extremely important part of the education system is those bodies that operate within the system as additional units, providing service for institutions, teachers, parents, students. They are part of the civil society supplementing the provision system through offering legal help, education, counselling, etc.

The review requires an important section on the clarification of the term *special educational needs*. The hypothesis requires to specify this term at a national level. According to subsection 25. of section (4) of act CXC. of 2011 on National Public Education, “…those eligible for special treatment due to physical, sensory (visual, hearing), intellectual or speech disabilities, those with multiple disabilities in cases of simultaneous occurrence of several disabilities or those with autism spectrum disorder or other psychological developmental disorders (severe learning, concentration or behavioral difficulties) on the basis of the committee of experts’ opinion.” (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2018) The diagnosis automatically gives social and economic benefits to the child. A child can get a diagnosis on the advice and recommendation of a professional (teacher, psychologist etc.), however, parents have the opportunity to turn to the expert committee as well.

**2.2 Sociological Perspectives**

In the following section, three main sociological approaches are introduced (structural-functionalism, the social conflict theory, the symbolic interaction theory). These perspectives provide important insights into special education. Therefore, I will apply those elements and critically analyze theories. In addition, a summary linking sociological concepts are given, namely stigmatization, social learning theory, the sociological imagination and social integration. A core section of this unit will be the review of a major theoretical work on the sociology of special education.

Structural-functionalism is the most often used sociological perspective applied to describe the role of education. The view is that through education, people learn to perform tasks that keep together the functions of society according to the norms and values of the community. These functions together stimulate solidarity and stability within society, trying to avoid what Robert Merton calls social dysfunctions that would
disrupt the operation of society (Macionis, 2011) Talcott Parsons differentiates the role of family and the role of education in the following way: one of the functions of family is to teach the value of ascribed status while school should add the value of universal assessments. (Giddens, 2009) The social placement function of education increases meritocracy, which allows upward social mobility for individuals in society. The structural-functionalist theory, however, assumes that the members of the society collectively agree on the norms and values that are held and the functions that need to be held in order for the society to be stable. It also considers society free of conflict and dismisses the idea that parts of the society have different interests and motivation keeping society in order. Most of the critiques targets the scope of this theory: the macro perspective that dominates the view.

Another macro-oriented theory is the social conflict theory. As opposed to structural-functionalism, it looks at the structure of society as it is based on inequalities, dividing the whole into a dominant group (whose interest is to keep benefiting from this position) and a subordinate, or often called disadvantaged group. (Macionis, 2011) The purpose of education is to maintain the inequalities between groups by tracing privileged children and offering them better schooling. (Macionis, 2011) The theory of symbolic interaction differs the most from the previously explained ones in numerous ways, but the most important is that it analyzes society at a micro level. According to the theory, people interact in countless ways by using symbolic communication which makes reality variable and changing. (Macionis, 2011) Bourdieu’s theory about cultural reproduction has very important elements for looking at special education. The root of the idea is the connection between economic position, social status and symbolic capital. In order to understand how and why these concepts relate, the idea of Bourdieu’s capital needs to be explained. It derives from the fact that capitalist society is divided by the ownership of the means of production. Assigning social advantages to the ones who own and have control over the subordinate group. However, Bourdieu differentiates between three forms of capital. Besides economic capital, he defines symbolic (prestige and status), cultural (through family and education) and social capital (social networks) as well. The concept of social capital plays a major role in theorizing education and its role. (Giddens, 2009) Symbolic interactionism assumes that the self-fulfilling prophecy is central to the functioning of the educational system, teachers, defining students in a way that it affects
how children themselves think about their own role, characteristics, capabilities etc. (Macionis, 2011) It is also important to include and identify elements of the theory in analyzing the results and placing them in a theoretical context.

One of the most important and influential works on the sociology of special education was carried out by Sally Tomlinson. In the following segment of the review the theoretical framework of special education is introduced clarifying the most important sociological concepts that are central to the field of SEN. The field of special education is not the only sphere that is dominated by a specific perspective. The first time that a sociological view was applied was at the beginning of the 20th century, even though special education was distinguished from mass education by 1870. Furthermore, the development of psychology opened a new era for treating children who behaved differently from what was considered to be normal. The allocation of students to special educational institutions is, however, a more complex phenomenon than the categorization of individuals by the system’s ideology and values. The main aspect of the summary is the importance of sociological perspective in special education, the power dynamics between the actors of this system, the issues of normativity, stigmatization, social learning, the problem with assessment processes, necessities and resources, the flow of information bureaucratic and organizational challenges, and the analytical perspective of the provision system as well as policies and practices of special education.

The reason why sociological perspective needs to be introduced to the analysis of special education is that other theoretical and practical disciplines (e.g. medical, psychological, and administrative) fail to communicate the social processes and the logic behind policies of special education. An essential starting point is the context in which special educational institutions and actors have to operate. In most of the modern societies the demands of the labor market are those qualifications and credentials that are gained through the education system. These demands, which are set by the dominant group of the society, owning the means of production, define the categories of normality and non-normality, thus non-achievement as well. The dominant perspectives of special education used to mystify these social processes, in order to uphold their dominance in the field over competing approaches. This is, for example, how the clinical model worked in special education. For a while, diagnosis was kept confidential from parents, leaving them powerless to cope with their own children’s difficulties. Even though this act is legally
unacceptable, there is a heritage of this practice in the Hungarian system that will elaborated further.

The application of sociological perspectives supports a broader view, including the analyzes of the definition of SEN and studying the functions of organizations, management, as well as the effectiveness of the education system. This entails the study of the main social actors’ reactions, background, and motivation for certain decisions. The power balance is tipped against clients of special education, being the weaker social group which has lack of information about their own children, meaning they have no power for fighting the dominant group. The analysis of power structure, despite of any specific approach applied are extremely important to understand for further investigation. (Tomlinson, 2012) Sociology does question the criteria for the definition of special educational needs, looking at why and how someone falls into the category of educational sub normality: What is the social context for the definitions? However, which approach should be applied to special education? is a hotly debated issue.

The structural functionalist approach is concerned with how certain actors of the system operate, how normality and sub normality construct the functions of the system. It unfortunately fails to look at the conflicts of special education as a sociological problem. It would be important to see how institutions, such as schools, organizations etc. conserve social problems. Tomlinson highlights that “... social problem orientation is not good to understand the development, organization, and change in special education.” (Tomlinson, 2012, p. 16) It is based on a prominent sociological concept developed by C.W. Mills, namely the connection between public issues and personal troubles. It requires a so-called sociological imagination to see this connection. The concept states that if there is a pattern in the context or the functions of private issues, then it becomes a public subject. (Mills, 1959) Special education represents the concept perfectly. Having special educational needs is primarily part of personal issues up to the point of a diagnosis. Moreover it exerts a major influence on children becoming part of the educational system, later seeking employment in the labor market. These are all social settings where the personal trouble, having special educational needs meet the challenges of social organizations and bureaucratic processes. Bourdieu and Passeron’s (1977) work and theory on the function of the educational system gives an accurate description of the function of special education as it states that “...the education system legitimates and
perpetuates the current social order by making hierarchies appear to be based on gifts, merits and skill.” (Tomlinson, 2012, p. 68) Social-conflict theorist Max Weber is known for class and labor-centered theories. However, he believed that domination in society over a group occurs in many ways. One of these ways is the acceptance of authority, which is a key phenomenon is special education. It applies to the field in the way that children and their families are often vulnerable to professionals, as they do not have enough information and resources to question them. More importantly, the social status of these professionals, the authority over the diagnosis, make families, especially parents accept decisions, diagnosis. The application of the social conflict theory favors the analysis of the struggle between government, policies and practitioners of special education. One of the major intents of the essay is to assess the status of the conflict.

Special education as a system is a constantly changing body of the society. “...expanding or abolishing categories...”, “...arguing about provision and allocation of resources...”, “...expanding numbers and types of professionals...” are all evidence that education and their parts do not develop spontaneously. (Tomlinson, 2012, p. 25) The interest of the dominant group, social, economic, or professional, is about keeping the position of power over the weaker social group, parents and children, in case of special education. The interest can vary by culture and the actual motivation of the superior social group, such as whether to prepare children with SEN for future employment at all and if yes, how to do that.

In the following, a list of a few specific issues and dilemmas in special education collected by Sally Tomlinson will be provided. The first issue that is probably the most determinant for the individual’s development is the definition and categorization of ‘special educational needs’. An example that was briefly mentioned before is the social definition of normality, which depends on the dominant group enforcing values on the weaker social group. The so-called normative (medical, for example, deafness) and the non-normative categories, which are rather social characteristics. The former serves as a call for diagnosis rather than judgement. On the other hand, non-normative categories expose children to stigmatization, which is a level of categorizing people, assigning them social identity according to personal attributes. (Goffman, 1963) The notion is problematic on another level as well. All children are potentially troublesome, the issue of normality is raised when special education aims to remove ‘troublesome’ children from
the normal ones. (Tomlinson, 2012) A strong base of this educational selection lies in the economic goals of schooling defining normality and defining the ‘labor market capable’ characteristics. Most of the industrial societies aim to be part of the global economic competition by boosting their national economy- fulfilling the need for human capital. This indicates that in these structures, the goals of a highly developed mass education are based on a knowledge economy, where low attainment (compared to the currently required qualification measures) is a problem. (Tomlinson, 2015) However, there is no clear economic goal of special education. The question is what exactly children with SEN must be prepared for, if the requirements of the labor market, the skill characteristics that are demanded cannot be achieved by the education that children with SEN have. There is another significant determinant of normality besides the economic expectations. The social definition of normality, using key characteristics of the majority, has just as much effect on educational assessment processes. What is more, it might predetermine the economic demands by sorting out those who are socially unproductive or just do not fit any of the categories set by the majority. In the educational setting, standardization is an example of such selection.

Another important issue of special education is the rhetoric of special needs. According to Tomlinson, it is a tool for legitimizing the exclusion of children from mass education. The proclamation that articulates the inability of ordinary schools to meet the needs of special children is only a defense of categorizing the concept of ‘need’. (Tomlinson, 2012) It needs to be part of mainstream education in order to prove that children are not categorized by theoretically defined non-normative condition, placing them into a legally approved subsection of education, but with their own social contexts. Tomlinson’s critique of the rhetoric of special educational needs applies to the macro-environment as well by arguing that the word ‘need’ is used for more than a scale point of normality: “Needs in special education are by no means confined to the children. They relate more to the needs of normal education to remove children…” (Tomlinson, 2012, p. 74) It is not only the term ‘need’ that could be target of criticism. Furthermore, the word ‘special’ could also be questioned as ideally there should be nothing special about a school that offers proper resources, environment, advice or counselling, education. to children, may they be significantly different in terms of their personal and social characteristics.
A widely disputed question of special education is the assessment procedure. There has been a section earlier about the process in Hungary, concerning that the hypothesis requires an explanation narrowed to the national level. Yet, a theoretical framework needs to be introduced as well. It seems evident that with the expansion of special education, there are more and more professionals involved in the system in which children’s abilities are judged. There is, however, a competition in the assessment mechanism between the medical, psychological and the educational sphere. The basic question of the conflict is who can decide whether a child needs special education. (Tomlinson, 2012) The complexity of assessment procedure does not only depend on the number of professionals engaged with the mechanism, but also the characteristics of professionals. In the setting of special education, they are the socially dominant group over parents and children. An example of this is that in most of the cases, clients (parents and children) do not have a decision in the opinion formed earlier by professionals. A sociological view of these cases is that bureaucratic processes legitimize and adjust into practice the control over the weaker group through the involvement of professionals. The more complex these bureaucratic processes become, the more professionals are needed, which excludes the opportunity of a quality communication-based teamwork between interested parties involved (medical professionals, psychologists, educational professionals, parents and children). (Tomlinson, 2012) It is also crucial, that a delicate balance be attained among between professionals. In the case the workload proves to be overbearing, the sharing information and continual discussing among those involved is a must. From the point of view of the hypothesis, this aspect is critically important.

Furthermore, the dilemma of integration needs to be mentioned. Beyond the issue of categorization that has been mentioned before, it is also important to look at the requisite of the idea, because other than pedagogical arguments, there are many aspects that need to be considered. Special education has been a subsystem of education since it came into existence. Policies targeting any area of social life, aim to come up with new guidelines that are the most cost-friendly to the main body of decision making. There is a big controversy in special education policies of integration. The more people with special educational needs are included in a highly competitive mainstream education system, the more resources are required to provide a quality service to children with SEN. (Tomlinson, 2015) It is, then the structure of mass education (standardized tests, selection
of high-attainers, self-fulfilling prophecy, categorization) that creates a space for teachers to feel anxiety about integration being forced on them. This anxiety reaches a point where teachers have an interest in removing children who behave differently from their classroom. The educational segregation of children with SEN hinder a very important function of learning. Albert Bandura developed the social learning theory that "...emphasizes the prominent roles played by vicarious, symbolic and self-regulatory processes in psychological functioning.” (Bandura, 1977, vii.) The idea that human behavior is based on socially mediated observations and experiences which creates symbolic functions to regulate actions is extremely important in case of children with SEN. The lack of a wide range of symbols to deal with the accomplishments through which an individual could evaluate and reinforce behavior of their own withhold the possibility of social integration for children with special needs. (Bandura, 1977)

An additional and final issue, which is the most important in terms of the hypothesis of the essay is the provision system, and its actors’ status and relations. Discussing the relationship of the social groups is an often-applied sociological perspective to the structural level. The role of teacher in the system is first tackled in this paper. For a long time, pedagogy was not dominant, not even included in either assessment processes or in decision making. By the increasing involvement of pedagogical-educational points, the needs of teachers to help children in existing educational institutions came to the surface and it became a target of educational policies to define skills and characteristics of teachers. Communication between professionals could be improved by changing assessment procedures and forms. Long administration delays, bureaucratic processes are often creating problems for parents. The involvement of parents in assessment mechanisms would be a very important step towards the reduction of inequality between decision making bodies and professionals on the one hand, parents and children on the other hand. Moreover, Tomlinson emphasizes the importance of partnership over involvement, meaning full access to information about opportunities and rights, adequate consultation. In reality, professionals' view of parents is often close to the “... probable incompetence of parents.” (Tomlinson, 2012, p. 109) using their professional status for legitimizing the rhetoric. The most effective way of helping the child would start with transmitting the knowledge that professionals possess to the parents, thus building a real partnership. Although, the basis of this change is
already a conflicting point, given that parents are afraid of professionals’ judgements, the bureaucratic processes that follow a diagnosis and the most importantly, about their own child’s future. (Tomlinson, 2012)

The above-mentioned theories and dilemmas serve as the basis of the research of the hypothesis. The appliance of sociological perspective will be a major guideline of the case study.

3. Methodology

The research statement of the thesis focuses on understanding a part of the Hungarian educational provision system. This subject is observed through a case study carried out using different social research methodologies to understand the situation and struggles of members of Tüskevár Elementary and Secondary School, which educates children with special educational needs. It should be noted that the case study aims to equally include experiences of professionals and parents of children at the school.

The methodological approaches that are applied in the literature review and the policy review are adopted from previous discussions on special education using a mixed methodology. The inclusion of observation and interviews suggests an interpretive research that focuses on experiences of social actors in their own social context, bearing in mind the characteristics of the social setting and its information value, and the objective and subjective content of the data. The design of the research is a case study: to collect detailed and rich data on the social phenomena and to recognize the characteristics of social dynamics. The in-depth investigation consists of personal observation (non-participatory and participatory attendance), personal communication (unrecorded interview), surveys (using a standardized questionnaire), and focus group interviews (group discussion of a phenomenon with the presence of a moderator). Methodologically, it is a mixed method of data collection as the case study that uses qualitative data is supplemented with surveys that are representative of the school community. In order to increase the internal validity of the research, both research design and data analysis intents to follow previous literature. The reliability of the study might be opened to criticism based on its methodological approach. (Lumen Learning, Research Methods for the Social Sciences, n.d.) The methodology design entails a rich description of the experiences. This might be the basis of further research with the possible inclusion of the different understandings of the phenomena discussed.
The basis of the case study is the review of literature that is relevant to the topic (see section 2.), which gives a sound theoretical background for not only the preparation and the data collection but the subsequent analysis as well. The literature review is extended with a section on current Hungarian policies of special education and policies of teacher and professionals’ training for the field and legal framework. Moreover, OECD overviews on teachers training and Hungarian special education tendencies are summarized in order to provide an understanding of national trends in the context of popular European practices. Linkages made between the literature, specific macro-environmental circumstances and the questions prepared for the data collection.

Specific types of research methodologies that are used for the data collection and its analysis are expounded. The principle method that is utilized to explore the field is a mixed research method adopting both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques.

As the data collection is carried out with a predominantly qualitative framework, it does not subscribe to the quantitative protocols of sampling, however, the choice of the institution was a purposive preference, as the research topic suggests the specific requirements. Participants of the later data collection procedures are unequivocally connected and are part of the school as either being parents of children who attend the school or as professionals who work there.

The data collection of the case study started with two unofficial observations that enabled highlighting the problems and issues that might occur at the school within groups (parents/legal guardians, teachers, professionals). The occasions observed were the following: a school organized parents’ meeting that takes place at the school monthly. Parents are divided into groups according to the grade their children attend. The second occasion was the so-called Day of Tolerance, organized by the school itself for both children and their parents. A very important reason for the meetings is to be updated with current issues of both teachers and parents. The same is true for the organized event, with a different condition, namely, its informality. The observations of this meeting gave strength to the data collection in a sense that questions which were asked later, could be directed towards already recognized patterns. The main purpose of the observations was to specify issues of scientific literature and to help understanding what certain hidden problems could be researched later on. The merits of the observations also enable me to
get to know parents/legal guardians and try to build a fairly good relationship in order to help each other for the rest of the research.

The data collection started with the quantitative method. The target groups were both parents/legal guardians and professionals (special education teacher, educational consultant, developer teacher, psychologist, psychiatrist, drama teacher, art therapist, sociopedagogist). The form of quantitative data collection was a survey. Two sets of surveys were developed for the two target groups, one for the parents, another one for the professionals. The instrument of administering the surveys were Google Forms with 16 questions for parents and 13 for professionals. The surveys consisted of multiple-choice questions, statements with rating options on a 7-point Likert-scale and open-ended questions. The purpose of the survey is to shed light on contradictions stated in the thesis topic, moreover, to narrow down the scope of issues that emerged previously during the observations and that are to be found in the literature. A prime objective here is that the answers of the two target groups should be comparable and evaluable according to whether they experience situations similarly or differently. Thus, the majority of the question in the surveys match, with the difference that the phrasing-applied to the target groups accordingly.

The qualitative part of the methodology section seeks to find out the answers to the identified concerns and questions in the form of focus group interviews. The logic behind the structure of the participants and the type of questions of the focus groups follows the argument of the structure of the surveys. Therefore, two focus group interviews were carried out. The focus groups were heterogeneous in terms of the participants’ position in the SEN system and adhering to the setup of the surveys, namely a group of parents and a group of professionals. The criteria of the number of participants were four for each group. 16 questions were prepared for parents and 22 for professionals. The interview questions were set upon the answers of the surveys, thus the two set of questions did not resonate with each other as the survey questions. Unlike the quantitative part, focus group interviews allow to draw a clear and detailed picture of perspectives and experiences. Additionally, a short interview was carried out with the principle of the school. The interview serves the same reasons as previous methods, with the difference that it gives insight to the situation from a different hierarchical position.
A failing of the data collection is to gather data from children. Theoretical literature on special education highlights the lack of children’s point of view and this research fails to provide an example of that practice. A reason behind it is that the author of the present paper finds it important to have a basic set of skills before turning to children with SEN and I lack that knowledge. My ethical intention is to not to cause harm, and without the proper skill sets, I find it probable that I would do. On the subject of ethics, the research was based on informed consent and gave participants anonymity and therefore conforms to the International Sociological Association code of ethics (see appendix for consent and information letter).

Figure 1. Methodology

4. Data Analysis
4.1 Background

The section of data analysis includes four branches. First, a profile of the institution of the case study, Tüskevár Elementary and Secondary School in Budapest, is presented describing the key characteristics of the institution, the aim of the school and the personnel. Further parts of the analysis follow the argumentation of the methodology explained earlier in more detail. Based on that, the circumstances and findings of the ethnographic observation are demonstrated and directly linked to the next data collection instrument, the surveys. The details of the surveys are presented, and a comparison is
made between the results of the two surveys. Afterwards, two focus groups are analyzed and directly connected to the literature review by the identified typologies.

4.2 Profile of the Subject of the Case Study

The profile of the school is based on two main sources of information: a face to face interview with the director of the school and the pedagogical program of the institution that is publicly available on the website of the school.

Tüskevár Elementary and Secondary School was founded in 1999 by three men, one of them has been the director of the school from the beginning. They have established a foundation called Hyperactive Foundation in order to provide legal and financial safety for the school. The purpose of building a school for children with SEN was to satisfy the institutional requirements of organizing camps, providing education and offering training for professionals. The founders were dissatisfied with the condition then and decided to go beyond the existing framework offered by the Hungarian education system. The school has operated for 20 years now at Csillébérc Leisure and Youth Center which is a 50-60-minute journey from the city center by public transport. It is a green area, away from the city in the Buda hills which is a downside and an advantage at the same time. It might be hard for parents and children to get to the school, on the other hand, children have a peaceful environment to learn and socialize in there. It is, however, a segregated educational institution partly due to its isolated location.

The name of the school, Tüskevár, is the title of a Hungarian novel about a boy spending his summer vacation in the countryside with an old man experiencing isolated life and nature. It is a suitable symbol of for the pedagogical approach of the school, letting children fail, helping them process the failure as well as promoting achievement and success. The pedagogical program of the school highlights that a restorative approach should dominate the attitude of professionals at the school. The concept of restorative pedagogical approach is discussed in more depth later. Eight different professions are being represented by the school staff, namely, teacher, psychologist, psychiatrist, developer teacher, special education, drama teacher, social pedagogist, art therapist. The school focuses on teaching English, computer studies, relaxation, art and drama as well as physical education.
Tüskevár is not a state-owned school, there is a tuition fee for students to enroll. However, only 35% of the children’s attendance is financed by their families. The school has an agreement with the Ministry of Education that finances the education of 32 children. The rest of the children are attending Tüskevár with the financial contribution of the Hyperactive Foundation, which is 10% of the foundation’s budget. The school receives a normative support from the state for every child, which has a multiplier in case of children with SEN. According to the director of the school, there are no children unable to attend the school due to financial reasons. It is one aspect of the connection between the school and the state. The relationship can only be characterized with the numbers given above, there is no feedback from any bodies of the provision system. (Péter Kovács, 2019. Conversation with Enikő Tünde Melke.)

4.3 Data Collection I.: Observations

The data collection started at the school with two observations at the school. On the first occasion, a parents’ meeting that the school organizes monthly was shadowed. The purpose of these events for teachers as well as for parents is to mutually update each other. It is divided into grades, parents meet the homeroom teacher of their children. I visited the meeting of 7th and 8th grade children’s parents and a few important observations were made. During one of the meetings, a quite serious issue, stealing, came up and it involved a few parents’ children who were present. They inquired about their experiences and the information of the homeroom teacher as well as other parents’ information about the situation. There was no sense of blaming, or parents calling other parents or the teacher for their accountability. All of them sought to understand the situation in order to handle children the best way they could. At some point in the conversation they started to share their own parenting technique and asked for the advice of the homeroom teacher. The whole situation felt extremely ideal. Parents clearly seemed in need of advice and information, and reaction in general to the upcoming issue. The question whether my presence was a factor in how the conversation was taking place is valid question, however, the instructions and guidelines of the methodology of an observation were meticulously followed. At no time during the observation were there any signs on the part of the parents that would suggest them being disturbed by and outside presence.
Furthermore, I participated in the Day of Tolerance organized by the school to increase open-mindedness and sympathy as well as providing information for children and parents. The first part of the day was organized for children, they could meet people with physical disabilities. Children at Tüskevár have special educational needs, currently none of them has physical disabilities, so the day served well for widening their perspectives. The event was extremely well-supported and structured, it seems reasonable to state that there is no better feedback than that children seemingly had a lot of fun. The afternoon of the day was organized for parents. Attending different sections held by teachers of the school, they could get to know coping mechanisms, relaxation techniques, an introduction to English learning etc. A session on coping mechanisms with five parents was observed. Teachers took part in the games making parents comfortable sharing their feelings. They had the very same impression as during the monthly held parents’ evening: legal guardians struggle a lot in everyday life with situations arising from the fact that their children have special needs. During the session, most often when a question or a task was assigned, they started to investigate incidents which currently they had trouble with. Both teachers leading the session as well as the other parents, reacted with patience.

Both events are not exceptions in the history of Tüskevár. Parents’ evenings are held monthly, additional programs are constantly organized. These forms of communication suggest that there is a connection between professionals and parents beyond official arrangements and acute problem solving. However, it also suggests that even if professionals actively try to help parents, it seems not efficient enough. Moreover, it also quite clearly transpired that finding the perfect solution to the problems presented was beyond their means. The patterns of the quality and quantity of communication on different levels of the education system does not seems to be an issue in Tüskevár’s case, however, a critique can be formulated from a sociological point of view. This has relevance to the literature review which demonstrated that though the importance of the relationship between actors of special education has been recognized earlier, the most valuable and efficient type is still not reached. Tomlinson (2012) suggests that the relationship between professionals and parents should be a partnership. There has been no criterion set for the evaluation of the nature of the relationships within Tüskevár, whether it is partnership or less equal. This could be a suggestion for a topic of further research.
It is important to mention the experience of unequal relationships is deeply rooted in the competing spheres of influence of professionals. Special education has been dominated by different fields of professions (e.g.: medical model, pedagogy), however, the primary motivation is often claimed to be humanitarianism. The belief dismisses the prevailing structure of society and recognizes that social groups with a monopoly tend to act to further their advantaged situation by legitimizing it with ideas. This often makes parents even more vulnerable to the amount and type of information they as professionals have their social status constituted within the idea of altruistic giving to a group that is cumulatively exposed to social mistreatment and judgements.

4.4 Data Collection II.: Surveys

The next section of the data analysis summarizes the answers of the parents and professionals for the surveys they filled in. Two different surveys were released and distributed (see appendix). The questions aimed at recognizing specific struggles of the groups, as well as comparing the similarities and differences of perspectives of a given theme. Thus, questions and statements are mainly the same, taking into consideration the particular characteristics of the situation of the groups by focusing on phrasing. The target groups had had more than a month to fill the survey before the focus groups were organized. The two data collecting methods were designed parallel with each other in order to see the perspectives of the different groups’ actors. The surveys did not collect personal data on the respondents, as it was not an aim to create a precondition for focus group participation. 16 parents and 9 professionals answered the questions of the respective surveys. The organization of questions and statements allows for an analysis of the responses of the target groups in relation to each other. Similarities that are represented first are followed by highlighting the differences of the responses presented according to the identified typologies.

Firstly, the surveys started with screening questions that identified the gender, profession or educational background of the respondents, the period of time professionals work at Tüskevár and whether they have worked elsewhere before, the type of family parents raise their children in and the period of their relationship with the school. Amongst the respondents, quite a few of their children started school in Tüskevár, however, more than half of the responses said that their children had been to other educational institutions before. As for the group of professionals the majority of respondents had worked in other
institutions, which raises the question why they chose to work with children with SEN and more specifically at Tüskevár. Most of the professionals recognized their motivation as a deep interest in the field of special education, where there is need for help. Responses to the questions that targeted the uniqueness and attractiveness of Tüskevár yielded that there seems to be an elusive feeling of a mentality of the school that both groups found important and appealing when it was about making a choice.

An important subject of the survey was the diagnosis. The majority of parents who responded had consulted with different professionals i.e. psychologists, psychiatrists, educational consultants, family therapists, however, they were divided on whether it has helped their everyday life. Their experiences are diverse: they find professional opinion helpful while others claim it has made their life more challenging. Even though some have positive attitudes, parents primarily turn to the school and teachers for help, which raises the issue whether it is a real choice and the level of trust towards the school is more than outstanding or whether it is a must. On the other hand, professionals mostly agreed on the significance of the diagnosis, adding their own critique of the process, but were also split on power of the change. Their concerns touched on systematic issues, such as the complexity of the diagnosis process and the criteria for different medical opinion.

Communication and the quality of relationships have been identified as key characteristics of an efficient provision system. Questions were intended to find out the elements of certain relationships. Two types of relationships have been targeted: communication with the same social actors and communication with the other group. More than half of the parents professed that a collaborative parent-community has formed in the school, however, it is primarily the school they turn to when they are in need. According to them, the school provides sufficient information about their children’s development. Professionals rated their colleagues to be the first people they ask help from. Responses for the type of relationship with the other group are more diverse. Parents agree on the availability of school staff when they seek assistance (see Figure III., Professionals Likert-scale), they also are the first to turn to for help, however, the latter needs further investigation on whether it is the lack of other professionals outside school or it is a trust-motivated action. The opinion of professionals is more diverse: they perceive differently the cooperation with parents (see Figure II., Parents Likert-scale), but the majority also believe that a mutually supportive environment has forged between
parents and them. Figure II. and Figure III. both show the responses of the two groups to different statements on a Likert scale.

Social learning theory and social integration is an important focus of the thesis work and that of the data collection’s as well. Although social learning could be an argument for integration, questions for both groups aimed to find out the characteristics of social relations of children in the school and how it is perceived by the school and parents.

Legal guardians have characterized their children’s peer group to be “special” and most of them openly consider this to be the result of their children’s special need. They say friendships are short-term relationships, mostly based on current interests of children. None of the respondents mentioned the friends outside of school. Professionals are the one seeing children interact with each other in the school and they also have a pedagogical perspective, but indeed, their experiences do not go further from that of parents’. Comments, such as “It is hard for them to create a community as they have no examples how to do so. We [teachers] have the responsibility to help them.”, “Their social skills are not developed, their community has no strong bases.”, “…Basic [social] processes are 2-3 times longer with these guys-because it takes a longer time for trust to build....” suggest that professionals are aware that Tüskevár, as a non-integrated school has more struggle with providing an environment for children to formulate strong and valuable relationships. A response stated: “They [children] can usually identify themselves with the social environment and at the same time find their peers extraneous and derogative.” Due to the lack of variety of social examples, children struggle with finding their place, however, as one response highlights, they have their own counsellor within the school they trust, and that is a very important relationship for them. Answers of the school staff referred to a phenomenon: an evolution of a community that might be different from other children’s practice. Relationships usually start with bullying and conflicts, trying to get to know the others through this type of interaction. Most of these conflicts end up in friendships. Providing access to children to learn social skills is partially the responsibility of school and educators. In the case of children with special educational needs in a non-integrated environment, the role of the school is more stressed.

As a target of the thesis work is to understand the broader, macro-environmental circumstances, both groups had a chance to express what they would change about the
provision system. As this is a fairly universal question, topics that were identified in the answers of the two groups are presented here. Respondents emphasized the significance of resources and infrastructure that, according to the responses, is highly dependent on financial inputs that they did not find satisfactory. The curriculum was mentioned by many respondents: expectations are high for children as well as for teachers and given that school is in need of supplies, everyone is struggling to meet the state-identified requirements. It is often portrayed as “... restrictive...”, “... non-conforming, non-inclusive” that “... marginalizes, stigmatizes, extrudes them [children]”. The subject of integration appeared to be a concern, especially among parents, who were divisive on the topic: some highlighted that teaching children with special educational needs required more resources which regular school cannot guarantee. On the other hand, some respondents stressed that the question of integration could be solved by preparing teacher for being able to facilitate the needs of children.

Figure II., Parents—Likert-scale

My child feels good in the school environment.

My child has goals, and his/her environment is supportive.

My child has the chance to live a life that he/she wants.

If I have a problem, I can contact the school.

If I have a problem, I can contact other parents.

I always have information about what happens with my child in the school.

People around my child, working with him/her every day, are doing their best to make my child feel good.
The final method of data collection was focus group interviews. Two homogeneous groups were organized following the same pattern of sampling as for the surveys, one focus group with the participation of parents, another group with professionals. Questions (see appendix) were formulated on the bases of participants’ answers to the questions of the respective surveys. The intention of the interviews was to clarify contradictions and to create an opportunity for specifying and detailing responses. Data in the following section is presented separately for the two focus groups.

The first focus group was conducted with parents. Four mothers participated in the interview which lasted for 52.40 minutes. It took place at Tüskevár, offering an environment that they already knew in order to maximize their comfort. As the interview was anonymous, the following fictitious names will be used for the respondents: Jane, Annie, Julia, and Kate. Their children are attending 7th and 8th grade in the school, but all of them attended other schools before. In all cases, the reason for changing schools was either inappropriate behavior of teachers and school staff or the peer environment. Tüskevár was advised, but Jane and Kate had chosen it according to their own standards,
for example: small-number classes. Their experiences with professionals and diagnosis are also very similar, except Jane’s, whose child does not have the official document about the diagnosis. Educational consultants and psychologists had helped them create the diagnosis, but that road was not without obstacles and neither are the ones they take now: “It was hard for me. It was very hard for me to accept.”, “Well, it has not become easier...”, “... everything was expensive, the private psychologist, the neurofeedback [therapy for persons with ADHD] ....”, on the other hand, Jane said: “It became easier for me. I got to understand of lots of things....” Her answer is quite common among parents with children with SEN. It often starts with the realization that the child does not behave normally, they do not fit the expectation of being ‘normal’ defined by the majority of the society. How can this difference of opinion be accounted for? One tentative answer might center on the capacities and resources of families that could facilitate situations that occur differently from other children. These answers suggest that it is an end as well as a beginning of a struggle. The interviewees had started the diagnosis process after “... terribly exclusionary and humiliating...” situations, “... the attitude was not really good.” and “... quickly getting to the periphery...” These pieces of evidences from the interviews raise an interesting question namely whether these struggles would be minimized by the provision system if it operated more efficiently, and what efficiency means for parents and other social actors. The attitude of people in children’s everyday life towards the diagnosis is crucially important, just as much is how children see themselves: “… Mum, am I going to grow out of this?”, “… he says that it is difficult for him. Not being able to control himself.” It demonstrates how much their self-evaluation is dependent on socially defined concepts, such as normality.

The provision system was an important subject of the survey and it came up during the interview as well. It is strongly associated with Tüskevár, interviewees often contrasted the system with the school itself. Julia and Kate had experienced the troubles with applying for financial support, the constantly changing criteria for application and entitlements. Kate said “A parent usually does not know. They have never met a child before, sometimes it is the first, not to mention problems with children, and they know their child’s reaction but do not know which box the child has to fit in.” It is not only the question of normality, but the preparation of the staff at different levels of educational institutions. Jane also confirmed it: “So they do not know the whole thing. They have a
very bad attitude and it goes wrong at the very first meeting with the school...” Julia also finds teachers training dismissible: “There could be solutions. For example, teacher training should keep up with the situations.” All the critiques formulated by parents were disharmonious with their comments on Tüskevár. “... it is a fact though that we are extremely thankful to this school”, “They understood what the problem was and said they were going to be okay with it. And they actually treated him with love, attention...”, “… then we applied and have not regretted it.” This, later, was explained in more detailed examples especially in connection with communication and availability of teachers. None of the interviewees hesitated to say that they could reach teachers “… to find out what exactly the network looked like...” Although Jane added a crucial comment: “I think it would help a lot if there were an external psychologist (outside of school) who could help with an evolving crisis.” Two out of the four interviewees could afford a private psychologist, but they do realize that it is not only about the limitations of parents’ capacity that should be a guideline for policy makers to create a provision system, but the importance of professional care and perspective.

A relevant note here would be to look at the wording and creation of the sentence, how it mentions social actors inclusively, meaning that the interviewee did not exclusively demand an external psychologist, but unconsciously created a link between professionals arguing for a more efficient provision system. Annie highlights that “We, parents, do everything we can. But we cannot do more than this.” It was a reaction to a general phenomenon, and it perfectly reflects upon the position of parents within the system. Let us assume and generally conclude that all parents want the very best for their children. Their capacities are often limited by systematic, bureaucratic boundaries and that is when the provision system has the responsibility to help those in need: providing information and resources, supporting financially the ones who need help.

In the final section of the data analysis, the data will be presented from the focus group interview with the staff of Tüskevár. Four professionals participated in the interview, out of whom two were women and two men. To safeguard the anonymity of the respondents, they are referred to by with the fictitious names Amy, Lisa, Joe and Thomas. All of them have been teachers in the school at least for the past three years. The interview took place in the school following the same change of thought as for parents: increasing responsiveness by providing an emotionally safe space for them. The interview
lasted for 60.10 minutes and the results are presented below. The analysis is divided into parts according to the typologies that were identified.

The first segment provides the analysis of professionals’ opinion on the provision system and their own experiences in Tüskevár. The official relationship between the school and the education system has been explained in the Profile of the Subject of the Case Study, however, it is the staff’s reality that extends a powerful description of connections. Regarding that the school functions within the Hungarian education system and even though it is not a state-owned school, it has obligations towards the system on different levels. An aspect of this obligation concerns children and their performance. Joe says “...the reality that society pictures...you cannot discourage that picture...this school has to close in [with reality] ...” Children can attend Tüskevár from 4th grade until the end of secondary school that they have to finish with an exam. All tests and points of assessment i.e. OECD Program for International Student Assessment, entrance exam from 8th grade to 9th grade and other “…objective measurement points...” apply to children at Tüskevár only with exceptions that are provided by their diagnosis (e.g.: children with dyslexia can take an oral exam instead of the written ones). The complication is that the majority of students at Tüskevár have trouble with social skills, concentration and studying in general, which makes obligatory testing processes more difficult for them to handle. What is more, standardized testing does not interpret individual skill sets, which would have to be more prominent in case of children with SEN. The majority of the assessment points do not try to examine the social skills of children. The content of points of assessment is just as important as the methods of evaluation. “... speaking for myself, I find a terrible issue of the public education to be the constant testing... whatever you do or do not do etc. somebody always, so like from a superior position for example, me, because I am an adult, assesses children. So, like I tell them this is good, and this is bad etc....” The realization of inefficient assessment methods by educators is extremely valuable. It reduces the hierarchical position between children and teachers by acknowledging that the point of teaching and education is not primarily to implant concepts from a hierarchical disposition.

The question naturally arises as to what these teachers see as the option to cope with this situation, or even more importantly function to their fullest potential in the given circumstances? Professionals realized the possibilities of the 21st century when it comes
to technologies and technical means that could facilitate the everyday life of children with SEN. “...there is no general practice for what happens if a child gets exempted or is allowed to use certain devices. There’s no one to teach them how to use it.” The emergence of pedagogical practices in special education is an important theme of sociological analysis of the field. Despite the criticism of pedagogical dominance in the field of special education by sociological approaches it is undeniable that the inclusion of certain equipment requires expertise knowledge. This leads directly to the second besides technology, which is pedagogical trainings and professional qualifications. Thomas said he had never had any classes on special educational need during the three-year program at the university. The general conditions of the teaching profession that have been presented by OECD are summarized in the literature section. Although, Thomas has also highlighted that “... it is also true that a lot of things cannot be taught, and you have to do it with good pedagogical sense and empathy.” Interviewees all agree on this saying that “… if somebody comes here, they do because they want to work with them [children with SEN]”. The preference of rapport over qualification is the mentality that comes from the school director as well as the pedagogical attitude of the school. Restorative pedagogy is a major base of professional’s approach towards children and any occurring situation. This type of macro-level communication technique suggests that an open dialogue can function within bureaucratic rigidity and systematic requirements by the personalization of relationship. A more flexible approach to students helps to improve the quality of communication in the school’s everyday life. It is an unspoken fact that the same approach is applied to parents as well. Survey results confirm that parents do rely on professionals and as the focus group reinforced: the nature of the relationship is based on trust, even though it could be a scope of criticism whether it comes from the social status and their relation to each other. Professionals claimed the same with their survey answers and the observations show that their relationship with parents actually aims to understand situations and discuss dilemmas.

Communication can be analyzed on a macro level as well. The school is technically part of the Hungarian provision system. The extent to which the foundation is free from the state has been explained in the beginning of the analysis, however, as professionals said, they have to follow the obligatory curriculum, they have to hand in their own professional portfolio (see Literature review) etc. The Hungarian education
system is becoming more centralized (see OECD in Literature review) when it comes to educational programs of schools and liability of institutions. This ties the hands of not only state-owned departments but also those functioning privately in the provision system and still having duties towards the macro-environment. Besides those official relations that have been explained by the director during the personal communication, teachers shed a light on their own actual experiences during the focus group interview. The Ministry of Education sometimes does send representatives to check on the institution, see a bit from how the school functions in a normal day. Amy says “They came when there was no break [during class time] ...it means they did not see the children themselves...” Joe adds “…they [representatives of the bureau] asked four-five cute questions, congratulated us on how nicely we work here.” It describes how state control could sometimes be symbolic and inefficient. In addition, it makes the everyday life of actors of the system harder by expecting school and teachers to function properly by the rules through and extremely rigid bureaucratic system.

Tüskevár functions as a segregated school within the Hungarian system. Social integration of children with SEN is an internationally defined aim by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities that Hungary ratified in 2007. It is a largely debated issue by many professional fields and categories have been defined for the different special needs whether persons could perform in an integrated environment. Professionals confirmed that an important proportion of children at Tüskevár could attend integrated institution but as Thomas said “…who did not pass through the filter comes here...”. It is due to the ineffective pedagogical training-teachers in regular schools do not have the knowledge how to integrate children with SEN, as well as the centralized curriculum and objectives that do not allow the personalization of the material. Even if teachers do so, working circumstances do not motivate professionals on the long run. Another significant barrier to social integration lies in the macro-environment: the attitude of people of the society. Stigmatization of people who in any aspect differ from the defined normality is a tendency towards children with special educational needs as well. Lisa believes that stigmatization comes from parents' denial and from systemic reactions that is public thinking of the certain social group. On the other hand, Thomas adds that “…they [children] do not develop a sense of illness [in connection with their diagnosis] because they do not stand out. If they were among typical kids…” It does sound as an
advantage of the segregated situation, however, as the social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) suggests alongside with many other arguments for integration, it is a long-term disadvantage for children with special education as they do not socialize in an environment where a huge variety of behavioral patterns occur. In addition, one of the responsibilities of the education system is to prepare children for not only the labor market, but also for social situations in everyday life. Children with special educational needs attending segregated educational institutions will be lagging behind and suffering from the previously unseen social patterns and behaviors.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

5.1 Conclusion

The objective of the thesis work titled Social Integration of children with SEN was to identify the conditions of the Hungarian educational provision system. More specifically the statement that was to be proved or disproved by the research: The Hungarian educational provision system efficiently facilitates the social integration of learners with special educational needs in Tüskevár Elementary and Secondary School in Budapest. After building a theoretical foundation for the work by summarizing relevant literature, the investigation of circumstances focused the analysis of the macro-environment: policies and the characteristics of the education system which was followed by a case-study. The aim of the case study was to gain insight to the functions, struggles and experiences of a school where children with special educational needs study. The mixed methodology of data collection provided not only the quantity of answers but structuring the questions of the focus group interview.

The data has demonstrated that there is a big difference between parents’ experience with the provision system i.e. diagnosis processes, schools and with Tüskevár itself. The relationships they have within the school are described to be the best compared to other experiences outside of school. Criticism towards regular school that were made increases the importance of pedagogical trainings that are just as much the responsibility of the provision system as financial aids. The data suggest that families, especially children themselves are a target of stigmatization by the society. This phenomenon is not only the result of public thinking but an evidence for how the practice of standardization marginalizes children. In addition, the concept of normality has been raised several times:
it derives from bad pedagogical disciplines, the malfunction of the criteria of diagnosis that is based on the socially defined concept: normality.

The collected data supports the previous literature and research on special education in the following subfields. The quality of communication and the nature of the relationship is identified by sociological theorists as well as special education sociologists e.g. Tomlinson. The focus group interview suggests that the features of connections are still based on sociological values connected to being a teacher, for example being a psychologist or on the other hand, being a parent. Individual struggles of the focus group interviews are in fact composing to patterns: teachers’ working circumstances, the relationship and the lack of communication with macro-environmental actors, the provision system etc. An important focal point of Tomlinson’s, 2012 Sociology of Special Education is how parents as social actors are lack of information that leads to a defenseless position compared to other social actors.

I find the inclusion of experiences of parents and children in policy making a primary step towards an efficiently functioning provision system. Other than the realization of their perspectives, a well-established link between school and home could be facilitated concentrating on supporting social integration and providing help beyond the school environment. This would require a more flexible and less centralized establishment of the provision system.

5.2 Limitations and Further Research

Concerning the methodology of the research, it is important to state that the study is not representative of the Hungarian educational provision system as a whole, however, concerning the mix methodological design that was applied, it is representative of Tüskevár Elementary and Secondary School in Budapest. As collected data is densely contextualized and distinct, I aimed to integrate the results to the sociological context based on literature. Upon these, generalizability and reliability of the case can be a focus of criticism.

An important limitation of the thesis work comes from the criticism of Tomlinson, 2012 research on the special educations disregard children’s voice. My research also fails to provide information on children’s experiences. Investigation could be done on what
are the struggles of members of the macro-environment, and whether it differs deeply from others’ experiences.

Further research could be suggested on the diagnosis process, children’s experiences and whether children from segregated institution are able to fit into society after leaving school and what are the prospects for children with special educational needs. Additionally, the research can be judged as bad by the lack of data on how Tüskevár is able to promote social integration of children without direct help from the system. Macro-level analysis of the education system would suggest the inclusion of social actors of policy making in data collections.
Bibliography


Appendix

The following document was given to participants of the focus groups in order to follow research ethic.

**Informált beleegyezés a kutatásba**

**A kutatás neve:** Speciális nevelési igényű gyermekek társadalmi beilleszkedésének támogatása az oktatási rendszer által


A kutatás célja feltárni az oktatási ellátórendszer felépítése és szabályai által nyújtott lehetőségeket és körülményeket a gyermekek társadalmi beilleszkedésének támogatására.

A kutatásban való részvétel önkéntes alapú. Az interjú bármely kérdését visszautasíthatja, illetve az interjú bármely pontján kiszállhat a beszélgetésből, elhagyhatja a termet bármilyen negatív következmény nélkül. A beleegyezésével hangfelvétel készül az interjúról. Csak és kizárólag én (Melke Enikő Tünde) és konzulenseim (Dr. Andrew Ryder és Goldstein Katalin) férhetnek hozzá a hangfelvételhez. Ha nem egyezik bele, írásos jegyzet készül a válaszokról. Minden, az interjúban elhangzott információ bizalmasan lesz kezelve. Az Ön neve semmilyen módon nem fog megjelenni a tanulmányból származó jelentésben, azonban az Ön engedélyével névvel annak alapján leírható.

A kutatási eredményeket összefoglaló szakdolgozatot konzulenseim és a diplomamunkát értékelő szakember, illetve a Budapesti Corvinus Egyetem könyvtárának honlapján keresztül kizárólag a Budapesti Corvinus Egyetem területéről hozzáférhető olvasók láthatják majd.

A kutatással kapcsolatban felmerülő kérdéseikkel az alábbi e-mail-címen vagy telefonszámon tájékozódhatnak: Melke Enikő Tünde, melkebebe@gmail.com, +36307543430. Konzulenseim elérhetőségei: Dr. Andrew Ryder, andrew.ryder@unicorvinus.hu és Goldstein Katalin, katalin.goldstein@unicorvinus.hu.

**Beleegyezési nyilatkozat:**
Elolvastam a fenti információkat, vagy felolvasták nekem. Lehetőségem volt arra, hogy kérdéseket tegyek fel, és az általam feltett kérdéseket megfelelően megválaszolták. Hozzájárulok, hogy a Speciális nevelési igényű gyermekek társadalmi beilleszkedésének támogatása az oktatási rendszer által kutatás keretén belül interjú készüljen velem és, hogy az interjún elhangzottakat felhasználják elemzések készítéséhez. Az engedélyt annak tudatában adom, hogy a kutatás résztvevői vállalják, hogy az elkészült elemzésekben a nevem nem szerepel, nem leszek beazonosítható és az általam megnevezett személyek/intézmények sem kerülnek megnevezésre a kutatást összefoglaló szakdolgozatban. A kutatás semmilyen személyes beazonosítható adatomat nem adja ki kutatáson kívül fél részére. A kutatásban való részvétel önkéntes.

Név:
Aláírás:
Helyszín, dátum:

The following questions were set in a Google form and served as screening questions for the focus group interview’s structure. The aim of the questions was to narrow down the theoretical problems targeted in previous literature on the topic, and to specify it to experiences of parents and professionals at Tüskevár.

Survey I.: Parents

1. Gender// Nem
   a. Male // férfi
   b. Female // nő

2. I am raising my child(ren)... // Gyermeket....
   a. with my housband/wife/partner // férjemmel/feleségemmel/párommal neveljük a gyermekemet
   b. alone // egyedül nevelem a gyerekemet
   c. I am not his/her biological mother/father // nem a biológiai anyja/apja vagyok
   d. I am not his/her mother/father // nem az anyja/apja vagyok
3. What is your highest educational attainment? // Legmagasabb iskolai végzettsége?
   e. elementary school // általános iskola
   f. secondary school // szakközépiskola
   g. High school // gimnázium
   h. advanced course // felsőfokú tanfolyam
   i. college // főiskola
   j. university // egyetem

4. When has your child started school at Tüskevár? // Mióta jár gyermeke a Tüskevárba?

5. Do you have other child attending to Tüskevár? // Több gyermeke is jár az iskolába?

6. Did you child attend other school(s) above 4th grade? // Járt gyermeke más iskolába a Tüskeváron kívül 4. osztály felett?

7. Why did you choose Tüskevár? // Miért a Tüskevárat választották?
   i. we had no other choice // nem volt más
   ii. a friend/family member recommended// ismerős/családtag javasolta
   iii. a professional recommended// szakember tanácsolta
   iv. I liked the mentality of the school// tetszett az iskola mentalitása
   v. other // egyéb

8. Have you consulted with a professional about choosing school? If yes, what kind of professional? // Konzultált szakemberrel az iskola választást illetően? Ha igen, milyen szakemberrel?

9. If you consulted with a professional, has it changed something in your everyday life? How? // Ha beszélt szakemberrel gyermekéről, hozott-e valamilyen változást ez a mindennapi életükben? Ha igen, milyen jellegű volt ez a változás?
10. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statement on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is completely disagreeing and 7 is completely agreeing. // Kérem jelölje, mennyire találja igaznak az alábbi állításokat! (1-7 likert)

- People around my child, working with him/her every day, are doing their best to make my child feel good. // A gyermeket nap mint nap körülvévek a tőlük telhető legtöbbet teszik annak érdekében, hogy gyermekem jól érezze magát.

- I always have information about what happens with my child in the school. // Mindig kapok információt arról, mi történik gyermekemmel az iskolában.

- If I have a problem, I can contact other parents. // Ha problémám van, nyugodtan fordulhatok más szülőkhöz.

- If I have a problem, I can contact the school. // Ha problémám van, nyugodtan fordulhatok az iskola pedagógusaihoz, szakembereihez.

- My child has the chance to live a life that he/she wants. // Gyermekemnek minden lehetősége megvan arra, hogy olyan jövője legyen, amilyet szeretne.

- My child has goals, and his/her environment is supportive. // Gyermekemnek vannak céljai, és ezekben környezete támogatja.

- My child feels good in the school environment. // Gyermekem jól érzi magát az iskolai környezetben.

11. If you have a question or a problem in connection with the child, where do you turn to for help? // Honnan kap segítséget akkor, amikor valamilyen kérdés merül fel önerben a gyermekkel kapcsolatban?

- from the school //iskolától
- from other parents // más szülőktől
- from the Internet // internetről
- from the psychologist/psychiatrist // pszichológustól/pszichiátertől
- nowhere // sehonnan
- other // egyéb
12. How would you characterize your child’s peer group/friends? // Hogyan jellemezné gyermeke baráti körét?

13. What would you change about the educational provision system? Is there anything you are missing based on your on experiences? // Miben változtatna az ellátórendszeren? Hiányol-e valamit az oktatási rendszer azon részéből, amit közvetlenül tapasztal?

14. Where do you get information from about your child’s development? // Kitől kap tájékoztatást gyermeke fejlődésével kapcsolatban?
   - from the school // iskolától
   - from experts outside of school // iskolán kívüli szakembertől
   - from noone // senkitől
   - other // egyéb

15. In your opinion, has a cooperative parental community developed in the school? // Ön szerint kialakult-e az iskolában együttműködő, támogató szülői közösség?

16. Do you find the following statement to be true or false? // Igaznak vagy hamisnak tartja az alábbi állításokat?
   - If a expert is consulting with my child, he/she does not necessarily has to inform me about what happened during the session. // Ha szakember látja gyermeimet, nem feltétlenül kell elmondania, mi történt a beszélgetés alatt.
   - It is a duty of the school to inform me about anything that happens to my child. // Az iskolának tájékoztatnia kell arról, mi történik gyermekelemmel.
   - There are platforms that provide legal consulting if it is needed. // Vannak csoportok, ahol jogi tanácsot kérhetek, ha szükséges.
   - It is important that parents involve their child in decision making affecting the child. // Fontos, hogy a szülő bevonja gyermekét a gyermekeket is érintő döntések meghozatalába.
   - Parents are responsible for their child until the child turns to 18. // A szülő felelősséggel tartozik gyermekéért, amíg a gyermek be nem tölti 18. életévét.

Survey II.: Professionals
1. **Gender** // Nem
   a. **male** // férfi
   b. **female** // nő

2. **I work at Tüskevár as a...** // A Tüskevárban dolgozom, mint:
   a. **developer teacher** // fejlesztő pedagógus
   b. **teacher** // szaktanár
   c. **special education assistant** // gyógypedagógiai asszisztens
   d. **psychologist** // pszichológus
   e. **psychiatrist** // pszichiáter
   f. **drama teacher** // drámapedagógus
   g. **art therapist** // művészet terapeuta
   h. **social pedagogist** // szociálpedagógus
   i. **special education teacher** // gyógypedagógus

3. **For how long have you been working at Tüskevár?** // Hány éve dolgozik a Tüskevárban?

4. **Why did you choose to work with children with special educational needs?** // Miért döntött úgy, hogy speciális nevelési igényű gyerekekkel szeretne foglalkozni?
   - **due to personal reasons** // személyes kapcsolódás miatt
   - **due to an influence from my family** // családi hatásra választottam
   - **I wanted to work on a field where more help is needed** // vonzott egy olyan terület, ahol több segítség kell
   - **other** // egyéb

5. **Did you work in other school(s) before Tüskevár?** Dolgozott más iskolában a Tüskevár előtt?
   - **yes** // igen
   - **no** // nem
6. Why did you choose Tüskevár to work at? // Miért dolgozik ebben az iskolában?
   a. I can easily identify myself with the school’s approach // könnyen az iskola szemléletével
   b. my previous colleagues suggested it // korábbi kollégáim javasolták
   c. I did not like my previous workplace, I just wanted to go somewhere else // előző munkahelyemen nem éreztem jól magam, bárhova máshova szerettem volna váltani
   d. I am inspired by mission like this // inspirálnak az ilyen típusú feladatok
   e. other // egyéb

7. Do you find it important for the child to have a diagnosis and to possess a document that ensures additional entitlement and benefits? // Fontosnak tartja, hogy egy gyermekek szakember által megállapított diagnózisa és többletjogosultságot igazoló dokumentuma legyen?
   - Yes, I find both important // Igen, a diagnózist és az igazolást is fontosnak tartom
   - I find it important to have a diagnosis //Fontosnak tartom, hogy legyen diagnózisa
   - No, I do not find either of it important // Nem, nem tartom fontosnak egyiket sem
   - other // egyéb

8. In your opinion, does the diagnosis change anything in the child’s everyday life? If yes why and how? // Mit gondol hoz-e a diagnózis változást a gyermek és környezet mindennapi életében? Kérem indokolja válaszát!

9. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statement on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is completely disagreeing and 7 is completely agreeing. // Kérem jelölje, mennyire találja igaznak az alábbi állításokat! (1-7 likert)
• I have everything that is needed for creating an environment for children that they feel safe in and like to be in. // Minden rendelkezésemre áll ahhoz, hogy a gyereknek olyan környezetet teremtsenek, amelyben jól érzik magukat.

• I always get information about what happens to the children outside of school, I do talk about children’s development with other people surrounding them. // Mindig kapok információt arról, mi történik a gyerekekkel az iskolán kívül, információt cserélek a gyermek fejlődésével kapcsolatban.

• If I have a problem, I can talk to my colleagues. // Ha problémám van, nyugodtan fordulhatok kollégáimhoz.

• If there is a problematic situation, I can talk to parents, who are opened to solve the problem together. // Ha egy gyerekkel van probléma, nyugodtan fordulhatok a szülőkhöz, akik nyitottak a helyzet közös megoldására.

• Children have all possibilities to have a future that they want to have. // A gyereknek minden lehetősége megvan arra, hogy olyan jövőjük legyen, amilyet szeretnének maguknak.

• I find it important to know children’s individual cases. // Fontosnak tartom, hogy tisztában legyek a gyerekek egyéni eseteivel.

10. If you have a question or a problem, where to you turn to for information? // Ha kérdése, vagy megoldandó problémája van, kihez tud fordulni?

• to my colleagues // kollégákhoz

• I solve it outside of school // iskolán kívül oldom meg

• noone // senkihez

• I have no problem // nincs problémám

• other // egyéb

11. How would you characterize the relationships and connections between children at Tüskevár? What do you think about the environment that you are
creating and the one that children themselves created? How would you describe social life in the school? // Hogyan jellemezné a gyerekek közötti kapcsolatokat a Tüskevárban? Milyen viszonyok alakultak és alakulnak ki folyamatosan? Milyennek érzi a közösséget, amit a gyerekek maguknak alakítanak, és amit Önök alakítanak? Milyen a szociális élet, amely nem tanuláshoz kapcsolódik?

12. What would you change about the educational provision system? // Miben változtatna az ellátórendszeren?

13. In your opinion, has a cooperative relationship developed between parents and the school? // Ön szerint kialakult-e támogató, együttműködő kapcsolat a szülők és az iskola szakemberei között?
   - yes // igen
   - no // nem
   - other // egyéb

The following questions gave the structure of the focus group interviews. Questions were mostly based on the responses of the surveys.

Focus Group I.: Parents

Warm up questions:

- Do you know each other? // Ismeritek egymást?
- Which grade are your children in? // Hányadikosok a gyerekeitek?
- Do you have any questions before we start? // Van bármilyen kérdésetek, mielőtt elkezdjük?

1. Why did you Tüskevár? // Miért a Tüskevárba hozták gyerekeiket?

2. How did the school welcome you? What were your experiences with applying and getting accepted? // Hogy fogadták Őket? (szülőt és gyereket) Milyen volt a bekerülés a Tüskevárba?
• Did your child go to any other school? // Járt más iskolába a gyermek a Tüskeváron kívül?

• (If yes) How was the community there? (peers, parents, teachers) // (Ha vannak tapasztalatok más iskolában: ) Milyen volt a közösség (a gyerek kortársai, tanárai, más szülők)?

• Why did you change school? What was the reason of leaving the previous institution? // Mi volt az oka az iskolaváltásnak? Milyen okból kellett iskolát váltani?

• (If they had to change due to the diagnoses: ) How was that experience for you? // (Ha a válasz az, hogy diagnózis után kellett váltani: ) Mik voltak a tapasztalatok ennek kapcsán?

• What were your opportunities? What school could you choose from? // Mik voltak a választási lehetőségeitek? Milyen iskolák közül kellett választani?

• Did you think about enrolling your child into a school that is not specialized to children with SEN? // Gondolkoztak azon, hogy nem speciális nevelési igényű gyerekekkel foglalkozó iskolába próbálják írni a gyereket diagnózis után is?

3. What are your experiences with professionals? // Milyen tapasztalataik vannak szakemberekkel?

4. How did you get the diagnosis? Why did you choose to turn to a professional? // Milyen út vezetett a diagnózishoz? Miért döntött úgy, hogy szakemberhez fordul?

5. Did their opinion/diagnoses change anything? Did your everyday life become easier or harder? (at home, your relationship, parenting, in the school etc.) // Az ő véleményük/diagnózis hozott-e változást? Inkább könnyebb, vagy inkább nehezebb lett a mindennapi életük? (otthon, a családban szülő-gyerek kapcsolaton, nevelésben, iskolában-és ezeknek a kapcsolata)

6. How did the diagnoses affect your child? What is his/her standpoint? How did his/her peers reacted? // A gyerekre volt hatással a diagnózis? Ő hogy áll
hozzá a diagnózisához? Mik voltak kortársai reakciói? (+ha járt másik suliba az ottani közösség reakciója)

- **Please tell me about your child! How would you characterise him/her in 3 sentences?** // Kérem jellemezze 3 mondatban gyermekét! Miken tartana fontosnak elmondani róla nekem?

- **Please finish the following sentences: I hope that my child… AND I am afraid that my child…** // Kérem fejezze be a mondatot:

Gyermekemmel kapcsolatban abban bízok, hogy… ÉS Gyermekemmel kapcsolatban attól tartok, hogy…

7. **Is there any state aid that is given after children with SEN?** // Van valamilyen fajta állami támogatás, ami kimondottan az SNI státuszú gyermek után jár? (Ha igen, 8. kérdés)

8. **Are you avail yourself of any of these?** // Élnek-e ezekkel az állam által biztosított lehetőségekkel?

9. **Do you find it a useful help?** /If you are not using these aids, why not? // Mennyire hasznos segítség ez az államtól?/Ha nem veszik igénybe, miért nem?

10. **Do you find the following statement true? If I have a problem, I find it safe to ask professionals at the school, who are helpful. Do you find the information that you get from the school efficient?** // Igaznak tartja az állítást: Ha problémám van, nyugodtan fordulhatok az iskola pedagógusaihoz, szakembereihez, akik segítőkészek. Megfelelőnek érzi azt a tájékozttatást, amit az iskola ad a gyermek fejlődéséről és arról, mi történik vele az iskolában?

- **Who do you turn to for information?** // Kihez fordulhatnak segítségért? (Ha az iskola a válasz, miért?)

- **What kind of help, or aid would you need?** // Milyen fajta segítségre lenne igény? Mire, kire lenne még igény? (pl.: jogi, pénzügyi, szakvélemény stb.)

11. **Do you share information and experiences, or ask for help from each other?** // Önök szoktak egymással megosztani tapasztalatokat? Beszélnek egymás között nehézségekről?
12. **Is there anything you would like to say that you could not? Is there anything you would like to share?** // Van-e valami amit szeretnének még elmondani, kiegészíteni? Mit változtatnának, és miért?

**Thank you for answering my questions!** // Köszönöm, hogy válaszoltak a kérdésekre!

**Focus Group II.: Professionals**

1. **Does the school have a jointly accepted pedagogical approach or mentality?** // Van az iskolának együttesen elfogadott nézőpontja, pedagógiai szemlélete, mentalitása?
   
   If yes, what is its base, how has it been formulated, is it constantly reviewed? // Ha van, honnan, hogyan alakult ki, milyen gyakran egyeztetnek róla?
   
   If there is no, officially, how would you formulated it in your own words? // Ha nincs, ti, egyenként hogyan fogalmaznák ezt meg?

2. **What is the relationship of the school and the foundation with the state?** // Milyen az iskola, és az alapítvány kapcsolata az oktatási ellátórendszerrel? **What are the limitations of the state and to what extent does it limit the school?** // Mennyire és milyen korlátokat szab az oktatási rendszer?

3. **Do you have regular monitoring? Who monitors the school?** // Van rendszeres felügyelet? Honnan? Hogyan?

4. **Do you measure the efficiency of the school? What are the indicators? Who carries out the investigation?** // Mérík az iskola hatékonyságát? Mik a mutatói? Ki végzi a vizsgálatot?

5. **In the case of regulations, amendments to the law, how is the profession being involved in the preparation of the changes?** // Rendezéletek, törvényi módosítások esetén mennyire vonják be a szakmát a változások előkészítésébe?

6. **To what extent is the national core curriculum part of the school? Are special children groups being taken into account? Is special education involved in the curriculum?** // Milyen szinten része az iskolának a NAT? A tantervet létrehozók figyelnek a szegregátumokra, speciális gyerekcsoportokkal foglalkozó intézményekre? Kitér az SNI-s gyerekek oktatására?
7. Do you have inservice training? Is it mandatory or optional? Who is the provider of the training? // Biztosított nektek szakmai továbbképzés? Ki által? Választható vagy előírt?

8. Who becomes a teacher? What are the reasons behind the disproportionate selection during the training of professionals? // Kik kerülnek ki a szakember képzésekről? Miből adódik a szakemberek képzése közben kialakuló aránytalan szelekción?

9. Do you have contact with other school who have similar profile? // Van szakmai kapcsolat más iskolával, aminek hasonló a profilja?

10. Do you have a strategy for tracking what happens with children after leaving Tüskevár? // Van az iskolának követési stratégiája? Tudjátok, mi történik a gyerekekkel miután befejezték az iskolát?

11. What kind of professional help is needed for children and their families outside of school? // Milyen iskolán túlmutató szakmai segítségre lenne szükségük a gyerekeknek és családjuknak?